



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Local couple banks on financial education with new CKCF fund**

**ELIZABETHTOWN, KY** (Nov. 25, 2019) – Education leads to change and a local couple is banking on it through their investment with Central Kentucky Community Foundation.

Mark and Sheree Nelson of Elizabethtown have gifted \$65,000 to start the Financial Foundations Fund with plans for continued giving. They started the fund using the Endow Kentucky tax credit program with the foundation. The fund supports students with quality financial education, equipping them with knowledge and resources improving their chances for success and the economic well-being of our communities.

“The Financial Foundations Fund is a great example of a community member stepping up to impact issues our community says are important, in this case financial literacy,” said Davette B. Swiney. “Mark and Sheree had an idea to improve personal finance education and we’re glad they came to us as their partner to make it happen.”

The fund was unveiled Monday, Nov. 25, to the public in a joint announcement with officials of Hardin County and Elizabethtown Independents schools at CKCF’s new Home of Philanthropy in Elizabethtown. Students in both school systems will benefit from the Nelsons’ generosity.

“We are extremely grateful for the generous support for financial literacy from Mark and Sheree Nelson,” said Elizabethtown Independent Schools Superintendent Jon Ballard. “Their contribution is an investment in our students’ future that will continue to have benefits for generations to come. It is commitments such as these that make our community a great place to be. The Nelsons are great examples of those who make a difference in the lives of our youth locally.”

With the Kentucky General Assembly’s passage of House Bill 132 in March 2018, students must complete at least one course that meets financial literacy standards. The requirement would apply to ninth-grade students beginning in the 2020-21 school year.

“I was thrilled when they passed the financial literacy bill,” Mark Nelson said. “It’s critical. I would argue it is one element that is greatly lacking in our education today.”

With the bill’s passage, the Nelsons wanted to help local students have quality materials and resources to succeed, so they partnered with Central Kentucky Community Foundation to start the fund. CKCF will work with schools to carry out the purpose of the fund.

“We’ve been blessed in this community and this was a way for us to give back,” Mark Nelson said. “At the end of the day, if you graduate from a high school in Hardin County, we want you to have a step up in financial education. We want our students to be successful.”



Although his passion for financial education started in high school as he learned from his parent's financial struggles and then his own, Nelson, president of operations for Planet Fitness/Kueber Group, said he put his passion to practice when he saw his employees struggle with basic finance both in business and personally.

"I constantly saw this lack of understanding of finances," he said of his employees. "Probably about 10 years ago, I pushed to get a retirement plan started and my partners were gracious to agree to it. We had pathetic involvement at first and we were matching a good chunk of employee contributions. I was scratching my head saying, 'What am I missing?' It turns out, it's just not stuff we were taught. They didn't understand why a retirement plan was important."

After educating employees on finances and retirement, Nelson said participation in the company's retirement program grew to nearly 90 percent.

"It's heartbreaking to see people who work hard, who don't have this background knowledge struggle and not be successful with the means they have," he said.

By starting the fund, the Nelsons' have created a way others can contribute so more students can benefit.

"We hope it is something that catches fire," he said. "The hope is that others will pick this up and say, 'I want to do this in my town.' We have to do better for future generations. We will be better off as a nation if we can address the need for financial literacy education."

Swiney said while the fund was established to serve high schools in Hardin County, it serves as a model for other areas CKCF serves, including Breckinridge, Grayson, Hart, LaRue, Meade, Marion, Nelson and Washington counties.

"What Mark and Sheree did is a perfect example of how philanthropy and community foundations benefit people," Swiney said. "Mark and Sheree saw a need and are passionate about addressing it. We hope others follow their example to expand this program to other school districts."

To give to the Financial Foundations Fund at Central Kentucky Community Foundation or to start a fund of your own, go to [ckcf4people.org](http://ckcf4people.org) and click on donate or call 270-737-8393.

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### **Central Kentucky Community Foundation**

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